

Community CROPS

Community Supported Agriculture 2008

17 July 2008---Thursday, Week Six

What's in the box:

Cranberry Potatoes

Zucchini Squash

Celery

Fennel

Cucumber

Lettuce Mix

Braising Greens

Banana Peppers (sweet)

Dill, Chives, Oregano,

Basil & Thai Basil

Summer is in full swing! The squash is going strong, and peppers, cucumbers and tomatoes are starting to set. The weather is really heating up too. Unfortunately, as the temperature rises, gas prices seem to keep rising too. Fossil fuel consumption is a hot topic these days.

On that topic, we've been happy to see how many of you bike to pick up your boxes; way to be sustainable! Being part of a CSA is a great way to help reduce fossil fuel consumption too. Local foods travel significantly fewer miles than conventional agriculture. In addition to reduced transportation, part of striving to grow your vegetables in a sustainable manner includes reducing the use of tractors and other motorized equipment. Many practices in conventional agriculture, such as weed and insect management or fertilizer applications, rely on the use of large machinery, not

to mention the fact that most of these products are petroleum-based as well. At Sunset Community Farm we keep machinery use to a minimum, and opt for using compost as fertilizer and alternative pest management methods.

Another hot topic in the news lately has been the salmonella scare in tomatoes, and more recently in jalapeno peppers. Small growers often blame large, industrialized agriculture as the culprit. This may be true in many ways, as large-scale agriculture removes the grower from the consumer and reduces accountability, but small growers do need to be careful as well. In case you're wondering what exactly causes salmonella, we wanted to briefly explain what we can. It's a complicated issue (the people looking into it haven't even given us a satisfactory answer yet), but proper management is one of the main variables. For example, while we do use manure as fertilizer in the fields, we only use manure that has composted for at least two years, meaning it has plenty of time to break down thoroughly. Clean water is also important, so we have our wells tested to make sure of this, and keep manure away from well heads.

About your veggies...

University Extension published a helpful guide titled "Healthy Cooking with Fresh Herbs". They suggest combining **basil** with tomatoes, peas or zucchini; **chives** with dips, potatoes or tomatoes, **dill** with carrots, cottage cheese, fish, green beans, potatoes or tomatoes; and **oregano** with peppers or tomatoes. Another bit of helpful information they add is to use three times as much fresh herb in a recipe that calls for dried. See <http://extensionhorticulture.unl.edu> for the guide with more ideas.



Fennel is in the Umbel family, meaning it is related to celery, carrots, dill and parsley. In fact, you can substitute it in many recipes calling for celery. When stored, the leaves will go limp fairly quickly, so they should be stored in a plastic bag. The leaves can be chopped into a lettuce salad for a unique flavor. Or just munch on them plain if you love licorice. As a simple cooking suggestion, try chopping up the bulb and sauteing it with zucchini, tomatoes and sweet peppers, along with some of the fresh herbs in your box.

Banana peppers are sweet peppers that are commonly seen pickled on sandwiches. Try them sauted with tomatoes and squash, or added to an omelet with your chard. Saute them separately before adding them to your omelet.



Recipes...

Pasta with Fennel, Tomato and Red Onions

1 fennel bulb, trimmed and cut into small dice	1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus a small cruet for the table
1 1/2 pounds tomatoes, cut into small dice	Juice of 1 lemon
1/4 small red onion, peeled and finely diced	Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 garlic clove, finely chopped	1 pound imported dried pennette
Small handful basil leaves, coarsely chopped	Freshly grated Parmesan cheese, optional
Small handful mint leaves, coarsely chopped	

Combine in a bowl the fennel, tomatoes, red onion, garlic, herbs, olive oil, and lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.

Cook the pennette in abundant salted boiling water until al dente and drain well.

Transfer the pasta to a serving dish and top with the chopped vegetable mixture. Toss well and adjust the seasonings.

Have a cruet of live oil at the table for those who wish to drizzle a little extra oil on their pasta. Source: Verdura, Vegetables Italian Style

Chow Mein

1/4 cup vegetable oil	1/4 cup cold water
3 cups thinly sliced celery	1/4 cup soy sauce
1/2 tsp salt	2 cups mung bean sprouts
1/4 tsp ground black pepper	2 cups slivered cooked chicken, turkey or pork (or tofu)
2 tsp sugar	chow mein noodles
2 cups chicken stock (vegetable stock should work fine too)	cooked rice
1 1/2 Tbsp cornstarch	

Heat oil in a wok or deep skillet. Add celery, salt, pepper, and sugar; stir-fry 1 minute. Add chicken stock and bring to a boil. Simmer for about 8 minutes. Meanwhile, blend cornstarch, water, and soy sauce in a small bowl. Add to skillet and stir until mixture thickens. Stir in bean sprouts and meat. Cook until heated through, 2-3 minutes. Serve over hot rice with chow mein noodles. Makes 4 servings. Source: From Asparagus to Zucchini